



State Personnel Newsletter

Veterans Affairs Dedicates the Colonel Robert L. Howard State Veterans Home

State Veterans Home Opens in Pell City

*Alabama Department of Veterans
Affairs Welcomes First Residents to the
Col. Robert L. Howard State
Veterans Home*

PELL CITY - The staff at the Col. Robert L. Howard State Veterans Home in Pell City waved small American flags, displayed welcome home signs and cheered when the home's first residents arrived on Monday.

William D. Gercken of Birmingham, and Peter E. McConico of Vincent, were residents at the Bill Nichols State Veterans Home in Alexander City. The two Vietnam War Veterans are now neighbors in the new home with a Pell City address.

The Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs offered veterans residing in the state veterans homes in Alexander City, Bay Minette and Huntsville the option of transferring to the Col. Robert L. Howard State Veterans Home. The families of Gercken and McConico accepted the department's offer.

Gercken's wife, Dawn, said she is glad to be closer to her husband.

"My husband looks forward to my visits," said Gercken. "Now that I'm only 20 minutes away, I'll be able to visit him more often."

Shirley McConico added that the Pell City home is near their home in Vincent. "My husband's move to the new home will be more convenient for me and my family," said McConico.

Last week the Alabama Department of Public Health granted the veterans home a full license after an extensive licensure inspection.

"The full license is a testament to the hard work by our staff and the home's health care provider, Health Management Resources (HMR), in preparing the home in all critical areas of care," said Kim Justice, the state Veterans Homes Executive Director.

The licensure inspection evaluated the homes' nursing staff, medical care, social services, life



safety, pharmacy, dietary, restorative, housekeeping and administration.

The home currently has 75 trained employees on staff that will increase to 300 in 2013.

The state-of-the-art facility provides residents with 254 private rooms, of which 174 are skilled care and 80 are assisted living and Alzheimer and Dementia care. The 240,000 square foot facility offers a community setting that features neighborhoods, houses with common dining and living areas, a town center, and a main street with shops and a sports café.

Construction of the home began in January 2010 and was dedicated with a ribbon cutting ceremony on November 1.

The home is named after retired Army Col. Robert L. Howard who is considered the nation's highest decorated Soldier in modern time. Born in Opelika, Howard was awarded two Distinguished Service Crosses, the Silver Star, four Bronze Stars with valor and the Medal of Honor for his heroism in Vietnam.

Howard died of cancer in 2009 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

"Welcoming our first two residents to the Col. Robert L. Howard State Veterans Home is very special," said Justice. "We look forward to giving future residents the same level of respect they so rightly deserve when we welcome them 'home'."

For additional information about the Alabama State Veterans Home program, visit the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs website at www.va.alabama.gov.

Volume 6.2

November 29, 2012

Points of Interest:

- State Holiday Schedule
- The State Personnel Board will meet on December 12, 2012

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Personnel Training Schedule – December 2012

The seminars listed below are being offered in December. All training offered by State Personnel Department is free to the employee and the agency. For more information, please visit our website at www.personnel.alabama.gov. To register for a class, please see your agency's training coordinator. We look forward to seeing you in class!

December 4: Performance Appraisal for Supervisors – State

Personnel Department in Montgomery

December 5: Progressive Discipline – State Personnel Department in Montgomery

December 6: Dealing With Difficult People – State Personnel Department in Montgomery

State Holiday Schedule

Governor Bentley has authorized the following holidays for State employees:

Christmas: Monday, December 24, 2012
Tuesday, December 25, 2012
New Year's: Tuesday, January 1, 2013

PerksCard Holiday Benefits



As an Alabama State employee, you will have access to hundreds of local and national businesses by activating your PerksCard online. If you've already activated your free membership, now would be a great time to access the sav-

ings and discounts in time for holiday shopping. Some of the businesses offering special discounts to all State of Alabama PerksCard holders are:

- Bliss Salon and Day Spa
- Spiffy's Car Wash
- Sunny Cleaners
- Terrell's Preferred Services Auto Detailing
- Montgomery Sam's Club
- Caroline Makram Accounting Services
- Body By You

- Extended Stay America
- Studio Plus Deluxe Studios
- Drs. Phillips, Todd & Taylor, P.C.
- Hoven and Morgan Family and Cosmetic Dentistry
- Inner Fit Physical Therapy
- Jerry Higgins Tire and Auto Center
- Thomas Child Care Centers Inc.
- Metlife Auto/Home (for special discounts on Metlife auto and home insurance, call 1-800-GET-MET8)

The majority of these businesses can service many areas of the state, so be sure to mention and present your State of Alabama PerksCard in order to obtain your exclusive discount! Visit the PerksCard website to find other businesses offering discounts in your local area.

If you have not yet received your PerksCard please go to www.perkscard.com and click the Register Now at the top of the page. Please use group code alabama101 when you register.

TAKE YOUR FAMILY OUT FOR A HOLIDAY MOVIE NIGHT! The Alabama Retired State Employees Association (ARSEA) is offering discounted movie tickets to active State employees. For discounted tickets, please call ARSEA at (334) 834-9116 or (800) 844-7732, or go to www.ARSEA.org.



EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR STATE EMPLOYEES:

Receive \$5 toward your purchase of a Christmas tree at Wadsworth Christmas Tree Farm, located at 3071 Dexter Road in Wetumpka!

Please show your State ID or pay stub to receive the discount.

Also, a special thanks to Frank Wadsworth for donating a tree for the State Capitol foyer! (The picture to the left is of the gorgeous tree, which was decorated by retired State employee Betty Teague.)



Deferred Comp Corner, a word from Great-West Retirement Services...

Have you checked us out lately?

Happy Holidays everyone. The staff at Great-West and I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday season. We would also like to thank you for three wonderful years here in Alabama.

I have a question for you, "Have you checked out Great-West and the State of Alabama Deferred Compensation Plan lately?" If not, you've missed some exciting enhancements to the plan. Here is a small sample of our recent changes:

1. Roth contributions are now allowed in the plan.
2. The website, www.alabamaretire.com, has a new look and feel. Give it a try!
3. Coming in December: Retirement Income Panel. Want to know how much income you can expect after retirement? Log in and find out.
4. Now available to cities and other municipalities. Know someone who doesn't work for the state but could benefit? Have them call us so we can get their employer* set up in the plan.

These changes, along with the addition of loans, a guaranteed lifetime withdrawal benefit, and others have made your plan a first class option for your retirement savings.

Whether you are current participant or not we welcome the opportunity to speak with you about the benefits of the program and saving for your retirement. Please feel free to contact your area representative (located under "Contact Us" on the website) or our Montgomery office at (334) 240-0057 to schedule an appointment.

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Donald Erwin

*Must be a city or other municipality in Alabama. Counties are not allowed to participate at this time.

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Special Holiday Recipe!



Peppermint Meltaways

Prep: 30 min. Bake: 10 min./batch + cooling
Yields: 42 Servings

Ingredients

- 1 cup *butter, softened*
- 1/2 cup *confectioners' sugar*
- 1/2 teaspoon *peppermint extract*
- 1-1/4 cups *all-purpose flour*
- 1/2 cup *cornstarch*

FROSTING:

- 2 tablespoons *butter, softened*
- 1-1/2 cups *confectioners' sugar*

- 2 tablespoons 2% *milk*
- 1/4 teaspoon *peppermint extract*
- 2 to 3 drops *red food coloring, optional*
- 1/2 cup *crushed peppermint candies*

Directions

- In a small bowl, cream butter and confectioners' sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in extract. Combine flour and cornstarch; gradually add to creamed mixture and mix well.
- Shape into 1-in. balls. Place 2 in. apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 350° for 10-12 minutes or until bottoms are lightly browned. Remove to wire racks to cool.
- In a small bowl, beat butter until fluffy. Add the confectioners' sugar, milk, extract and food coloring if desired; beat until smooth. Spread over cooled cookies; sprinkle with crushed candies. Store in an airtight container. **Yield:** 3-1/2 dozen.

Nutritional Facts: 1 cookie equals 90 calories, 5 g fat (3 g saturated fat), 13 mg cholesterol, 36 mg sodium, 11 g carbohydrate, trace fiber, trace protein. **Diabetic Exchanges:** 1 fat, 1/2 starch.

Recipe from [A Taste of Home](#)

State Personnel Department

Folsom Administrative Building
64 North Union Street, Suite 300
Montgomery, AL 36130-4100

Editor: Brittany Crain
Phone: 334-353-1148

E-mail: newsletter@personnel.alabama.gov



We're on the Web!

www.personnel.alabama.gov



****CORRECTION:** Employees hired after January 1, 2013 will pay 6% toward retirement, not the 6.5% as stated in the September 2012 Newsletter

Follow us on Facebook for updates on testing, job announcements, the Nationwide Settlement Agreement and more! Search for "State of Alabama Personnel Department"

The Alabama Merit System law created the Personnel Department to be administered by a Personnel Director who answers to an independent board. The Board currently consists of five members who serve staggered six-year terms. Two members are appointed by the Governor, one by the Lieutenant Governor, one by the Speaker of the House, and one member is an elected classified State employee who is subject to all merit system rules and regulations.

By law, the Board is required to meet once each month. Its principal functions are to:

- * adopt and amend rules and regulations;
- * adopt and modify classification and pay plans;
- * hear the appeals of employees who have been dismissed;
- * represent public interest in the improvement of personnel administration in state service; and
- * advise and assist the Personnel Director.

The Personnel Department is divided into 9 major areas: Classification and Pay; Examination, Recruitment and Certification; Personnel and Payroll Audit; Information Systems; Training; Legal; Administrative Law Judge; Transportation Work Group; and Administration. Please remember, the Personnel Department is here to protect the merit system and to serve as a resource for State employees and the citizens of Alabama!

The State Personnel Board is scheduled to meet on December 12, 2012, at 10:00 a.m. in the Board Room on the 3rd Floor of the Folsom Administrative Building in Montgomery. The meeting is open to the public.